

Graduate Council Retreat Minutes

5/19/17

Attendance from Graduate Council Retreat

MEMBER NAME	DEPARTMENT
Jen Almjeld	Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication
Chris Arndt	College of Arts and Letters
Deborah Bandalos	Assessment & Measurement
MaryLou Bourne	Research & Scholarship/ Technology Innovation and Economic Development
Dannette Bronaugh	Education Programs
Pete Bsumek	Communication Studies
Jie Chen	The Graduate School
Terry Dean	The Graduate School
Jeff Dyche	Psychology
Melody Eaton	Health Sciences/OT
Tracie Esmaili	The Graduate School
Karen Ford	Strategic Leadership
Brooks Hefner	English
Corey Hickerson	Communication Studies
M. Hossain Heydari	Biology
Chris Hughes	College of Science and Math
Marilou Johnson	Academic Affairs
Michael Klein	WRTC
Sarah MacDonald	Outreach & Engagement
Christine May	Biology
Fred Mayhew	Public Administration
Tisha McCoy-Ntiamoah	MBA
Lynette Michael	The Graduate School
Elizabeth Richardson	Health Sciences/OT
Liz Rose	The Graduate School
Ayasakanta Rout	Communication Sciences & Disorders
Lara Sapp	Libraries & Educational Technologies
Kristi Shackelford	Academic Affairs
Mary Jean Speare	Music
Michael Stoloff	The Graduate School
Jeff Tang	ISAT
Ginny Taylor	The Graduate School
Jane Thall	Education, Learning, Technology and Leadership Education Department, Adult Education Human Resource Development Program
Bill White	Educational Foundations & Exceptionalities Department
Bill Wightman	Art & Art History
Diane Wilcox	Adult ED/HRD
Sheree Will	The Graduate School

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I. The minutes from the last meeting of the Graduate Council (March 2017) were approved. Michael Klein made the motion for approval which received a seconded motion from Dannette Bronaugh.

II. Discussion and Action Items

1. TGS's APR External Review Report: Response to the Recommendations

- The process was very comprehensive, inclusive and systematic. Many units were involved including Academic Unit Heads, Department Heads, etc.
- This was an APR of the graduate school and graduate education at JMU.
- Offered the opportunity to gather feedback and thoughts of the recommendations.
- Michael Stoloff headed the APR Committee.
- Self-study, development and surveys all contributed as well.
- Recommendations from Graduate Council members and all heads for response.
- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of The Graduate School.
- Recommendations 1-5 were things to do soon. Recommendations 6-10 were things to do later.
- Numbers on the table were mixed up on purpose (1&6, 2&7, 3&8, 4&9 and 5&10). Wanted the groups to be randomly seated in order to consider the various recommendations, give feedback, have a conversation, make key points, be prepared to share the ideas with the group which will give commentary and perspective.
- Wanted groups to formulate consistent responses.
- 15 minutes to discuss amongst the group.

Number 1: Automate processes for greater efficiency

- The consensus from the group was that it was a great idea. How do we go about automating everything? The ideal is for less paperwork (too many forms as it is). Trying to automate grant sponsorship. Was very helpful process. The registrar is integrating it as well.

Number 2: The Graduate School must overbook offers of admission and assistantships

- Will JMU cover overbook assistantships? Create a pool of assistantships that will open up after May 1. Everyone who was promised an assistantship will have signed up. Anything that is left over will be opened up. Standardized timing of job postings across campus. Assistantships awarded across campus.
- Top tier students want higher caliber assistantships. The Graduate School serves as a voice that will assist in the academic experience for graduate students. Their work as

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GA's is not cheap labor but beneficial to their overall experience and preparing them for future jobs.

- Can the pool be divided? Maybe an April 15th deadline...and summer admission will be offered later. In order to avoid a waiting list.
- Close to using our budget. Have not approached this in a long time. Academic Affairs encourages us to overbook and aggressively get offers out there.
- Tuition deposit can be an idea. Three programs already have that.
- Assistantship waitlist is a good, creative idea.

Number 3: Articulate the centrality of Graduate Education's importance to JMU

- How do graduates contribute to undergrads? Data is needed.
- How about mentoring? Teaching? Outreach into the community? Grants? Scholarships?
- There are a lot of Double Dukes. They feel their experiences blended together.
- We should track alumni about their graduate experiences after the JMU experience.
- This is a problem at most comprehensive institutions...the undergrad experience drives the institution.

Number 4: Clarify role at University

- 5 Year Program should begin immediately.
- How should we properly advise them? Need a smoother transition between the 4th and 5th years.
- The Graduate School makes the 5th year better.
- Better communication and interface between graduate students and writing centers.
- Graduate students want to feel a part of something.
- Student Success Center needs more resources to assist graduate students.
- There is more focus on the undergrad experience.
- How to tackle assisting PhD students who are not interested in an academic path. There are no resources readily available.
- CAP – establish solid contacts, better resources.
- This issue is discussed a lot – training/working with graduate students in careers beyond academic track.
- How to properly translate skills into new areas? New program developments? Possibly grants?

Number 5: Restructure Graduate Council to form a nimble advisory board

- *A small Executive Committee should meet more frequently. This committee will encourage more voices.
- Executive Committee more the norm. Need 1 representative from each college. Can have one large meeting per semester. The large body is needed to make program changes.

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- The Graduate School is on everyone's radar. Graduate education is significant and important at JMU. It should be on more people's conscience. Encourage closer relationships between Deans and The Graduate School.

Number 6: International Students and Programs

- We need to get more international students applying and we are struggling to hold them.
- The amount we do have is not competitive with other universities.
- We lose them to other major universities.
- They need a stronger support system once they are here: international and diversity in general.
- Easy to get them to apply but hard to assist them once they are here: health insurance, apartments, etc.
- Avoid financial hardships once they arrive.
- Need assistance with Visa issues, bills, social security numbers, real world paperwork. Literacies needed to live in the states.
- Sponsorship of these students?

Number 7: Cohen Center

- Need more programs. Encourage professionalization and leadership training.
- Make it visible for The Graduate School.
- Work with Advancement for grants.
- Under The Graduate School through Terry, part of student support.
- Potential in graduate education and graduate training.
- Cross disciplinary connections. Roll out the rebranding of the center by January.

Number 8: Improve graduate stipends/assistantships/tuition waivers

- Health coverage, housing assistants.
- Access and Inclusion to help with housing/schooling for the families of graduate students. This is offered to faculty members.
- Stipends. Compare to other major schools. Make changes not out of proportion.
- Out of state students especially need help. It's too costly – the out of state rate is high.
- Advocate for a lower rate.
- 52% of applicants are out of state. We need to address the issue of high rates. Focus on competitors.

Number 9: Be sure any outcomes are measurable

- Measurements not useful for The Graduate School.
- Data should be meaningful, useful and actionable.
- Need conversations to help make this happen.
- Need assessment template. What do programs need?

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Number 10: Alumni and Community Advisory Board

- Explore and work with Terry Dean on that prospect.

2. Graduate Admissions and Graduate Certificate Programs Taskforce Reports

- The Graduate Council has discussed this issue and it needs closure.
- The Certificate Program is an important area that was studied by the External Review Team.
- Main activities of the Graduate Admission Task Force is to improve the process of graduate school admissions. This will be a step for next year.
- Admission requirements will encourage students to apply.
- Membership is voluntary.
- Discontinue university-wide requirement of standardized test scores. This has been approved.
- Changes to English proficiency requirements for international applicants. Briefly discussed by the Graduate Council before and continued it at the retreat.
- Outline the best practices and recommendations to help graduate programs develop rigorous but inclusive admission standards.

3. English Language Proficiency Requirements

- All international students must demonstrate proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening in English.
- TOEFL and IELTS minimum scores are highest in the state and among other peer institutions.
- JMU has made exceptions for lower scoring students in the past and these students were successful.
- International students pay very close attention to details of published criteria. They figure there are no exceptions.
- We need to encourage more flexible criteria to international students.
- Since 1997, 178/184 international students successfully finished their programs.

Proposed English Language Admissions Policy

1. Prior degree earned at an institution where English was the primary language of instruction.
2. Satisfactory test scores. TOEFL (80 or above) and IELTS (6.5) and the subtests must be satisfactory in reading, writing, speaking and listening.
3. Successfully complete English language preparation programs for graduate school offered by Study Group, EMU, and ELS.

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4. Offer alternative evidence of the English language proficiency for consideration.
 - ✓ Make this a note instead of an actual policy. Examples of alternative evidence include “Candidates with exceptional circumstances may present alternate evidence (which will be reviewed) of English language proficiency for consideration by The Graduate School.”
 - ✓ Send vote for #4 as note with specific examples instead of specific item.
 - ✓ OIP/international students will examine the wording.
 - Programs will make the primary decision. The Graduate School will inquire of the decision and the program can back it up.
 - Certain programs do require more stringent English requirements.
 - The council likes the idea of options for more diverse students and it will encourage diversity.
 - 10% of international students apply yearly. We want to increase this enrollment.
 - What support can we put in place for these students?
 - OIP is committed to helping students.
 - The Student Service Learning Center needs more built in support for these students.
 - We need to get support in place and increase the international applicants by 2019.
 - Work with partners on campus for better support.
 - Baseline policy across the board. Individual programs can be more specific in their decisions.
 - Test score is different when you compare the original paper (600 maximum) to the computer (120 maximum). The transition of the test scores has not been discussed at JMU for a while.
 - Conditional acceptance for students with lower scores. Work with students to raise their score after the first semester.
 - Embassy Program under Study Group on campus. Develop English language skills. 4 or 8 week intensive programs. “Ok” skills to higher level. These formal programs will have to be paid for by students.
 - Students should know how to improve if they weren’t admitted. Provide real reasons and not be so vague.
 - The particular program will give reason and it’s not up to TGS.
 - Best Practices Recommendations to start in fall 2017. Standing recruitment and admissions commissions will replace the Taskforce to develop and document the best practice recommendations.
 - The Graduate School will regularly schedule meetings for Program Directors, Faculty, and Staff to discuss recruitment and admission policies.
 - Continue this discussion at the next Graduate Council Meeting.

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4. Graduate Certificate Program

- Taskforce was created last semester. Chris Arndt did a great job working on the project. Talk about the four major questions.

Number 1: What is the role and value of a graduate certificate?

Number 2: Does the existing administration of graduate certificates (through Outreach and Engagement; different funding model) make sense for future graduate certificates?

Number 3: How many credits can be transferred (or double-counted) between graduate degrees and certificate programs in a field?

Number 4: How are graduate certificates assessed?

- Get feedback from recommendations from taskforce.
- Met before Spring Break and every few weeks.
- Certificates and 5th Year Programs are the key areas of opportunity for The Graduate School.
- Task force for 5th Year Program formed in next semester?
- APR had language that The Graduate School should be the “facilitator” therefore that would be our role to work with programs for additional support.
- Certificates are developed to meet demands and are flexible.

Graduate Council Meeting Dates, 2017-2018 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Thursdays	
September 14, 2017	Madison Union (Taylor Hall) 405
October 12, 2017	Madison Union (Taylor Hall) 405
November 9, 2017	Madison Union (Taylor Hall) 405
No December Meeting	
January 11, 2018	Madison Union (Taylor Hall) 405
February 8, 2018	Madison Union (Taylor Hall) 404
March 15, 2018	Madison Union (Taylor Hall) 405
No April Meeting	
May 18, 2018 (Friday)	Graduate Council Retreat (Montpelier Room – East Campus Dining Hall) 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM